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SEEKING JUSTICE IN MISSIONS



JUNE, 1981

MISSION

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Mission JOURNAL

"TO EXPLORE THOROUGHLY THE SCRIPTURES AND THEIR MEANING . . . TO UNDERSTAND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHURCH LIVES AND HAS HER MISSION . . . TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR COMMUNICATING THE MEANING OF GOD'S WORD TO OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD."

—EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT, JULY, 1967

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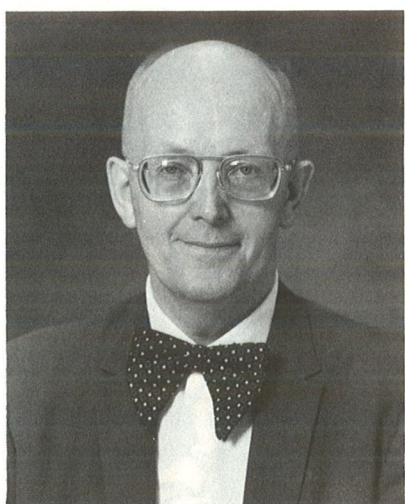
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Gerrit J. tenZythoff

Who Speaks For God?

Moslems claim they do and are ecumenical in their claim. Moslems include Moses and Jesus among the seventy spokesmen for God, although for them, only Muhammed is the *rasul*, the seal of all these prophets.

- What does this mean for Jews?
- What does this mean for Christians?
- How do Moslems perceive Christian missions?
- For what reasons would Moslems unite in a *jihad* (holy "war"), and for what reasons would they prefer peace?
- Would Moslems really want to ally themselves with Communists?
- If so, what does that mean?

ANNOUNCING THE ANNUAL MISSION JOURNAL READERS' SEMINAR

Friday, June 19, 7:00 p.m.

DFW Airport, Amfac Hotel East, Sector 7

Theme: The World of Islam

Guest Speaker: Gerrit J. tenZythoff

Mission Journal readers are a special group of people and are bound together by a common bond.

This is why Readers' Seminars — the one occasion each year when readers can share in fellowship together — are such important occasions.

Because our readers are sensitive and alert to the world around them, and because of the significance of the Middle East today, this year's Readers' Seminar focuses on the world of Islam.

The speaker for the seminar is Dr. Gerrit J. tenZythoff, a dynamic and widely sought-after lecturer. Born in the Netherlands and

educated at the University of Utrecht, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Chicago, tenZythoff is Chairman of a flourishing Department of Religious Studies at Southwest Missouri State University. He has traveled extensively in the Moslem world, and participated this past summer in a Moslem/Christian dialogue in Geneva, Switzerland, sponsored by the World Council of Churches.

We hope that many of our readers in the Dallas-Fort Worth area — and their friends — will share with us in this evening of exploration, stimulation, and fellowship.

TO BE A PEOPLE OF JUSTICE



“While 750,000,000 people live on annual incomes of \$75.00 or less and while from one-half to one billion people face life on starvation diets, Christians go about their activities as churchmen in a fantasy world.”

By LARRY M. JAMES

How could it happen that a movement standing on the biblical record as the “ground of its being” should largely neglect at least one central concern of God’s word? Even though the analysis sounds out of context when applied to the Restoration heritage, the words of H. Richard Niebuhr assume relevance in a startling way:

... they understand Christ through culture, selecting from his teaching and action, as well as from the Christian doctrine about him, such points as seem to agree with what is best in civilization. (*Christ and Culture*, pp. 83-84).

How so? The fact is, the conservative wing of the ground swell to “restore primitive Christianity” largely ignores a rich vein of truth running through the mine of God’s word concerning justice and its inseparable relationship to faith.

But even a cursory overview of the Bible reveals Yahweh’s radical commitment to justice in the world. Justice is always central to faith and to covenant relation between God and his people. The

people of Yahweh find their chosenness and meaning as they become agents of justice in history on behalf of their creator. But many believers remain uninitiated before a biblical doctrine of justice. The word’s fundamental emphasis on God’s everlasting concern for the poor, the suffering, the ill, and the oppressed is largely neglected by those who claim to be “a people of the Book.” Therefore, a sketchy and at best inadequate overview is in order.

The Old Testament and Justice

By reading through the Psalms one quickly becomes aware of the centrality of justice in God’s program of action in history.

- * “The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble” (Ps. 9:9).
- * “‘Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan, I will now arise,’ says the Lord; ‘I will place him in the safety for which he longs’ ” (Ps. 12:5).
- * “‘With all my heart I will say to the Lord, ‘There is no one like you. You protect the weak from the strong, the poor from the oppressor’ ” (Ps. 35:10, TEV).

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- * "With my mouth I will give great thanks to the Lord; I will praise him in the midst of the throng. For he stands at the right hand of the needy, to save him from those who condemn him to death" (Ps. 109:30-31).
- * "He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people" (Ps. 113:7-8).
- * "I know the Lord maintains the cause of the afflicted, and executes justice for the needy" (Ps. 140:12).

Countless other passages could be noted (cf. Ps. 89:8,14; 94:1-15; 102:18-22; 107:4-9; 146:5-9, *et. al.*).

Whether one considers the songs of the singer of liberation, the passages of the Penteteuch, or the piercing directives of the prophets, the Old Testament provides powerful and undeniable witness to God's just character issuing in a call for justice in the earth. (Cf. Ex. 3:7-10; 6:2-9; 22:25-27; 23:6-12; Lev. 19:9-18, 33-36; 23:22; 25:1-55; Deut. 1:16-17; 10:17-19; 14:28-29; 15:1-18; 16:18-20; 24:10-22; 25:13-16; 26:1-15; 32:4; Isa. 1:10-17; 3:3-25; 5:8-17, 22-25; 9:6-7; 10:1-4; 11:1-5; 25:4-8; 26:5-6; 61:1-4; Jer. 5:26-29; 21:11-12; 22:1-5, 13-19; 34:8-17; Ezk. 18:5-9; 22:6-12, 23-31; 45:9-12; Hos. 12:7-9; Amos 2:6-8; 3:15-4:3; 5:6-24; 6:4-7; 8:4-8; Micah 2:1-10; 3:1-12; 4:1-4; 6:6-15; Hab. 2:5-12; Zeph. 3:1; Zech. 7:8-14; 8:14-17; Mal. 3:5; *et. al.*)

The New Testament and Justice

The pages of the New Testament are replete with the words of justice. The "Magnificat" of Mary reviews how the mother of the Lord understood her life as caught up in God's strategy to justify and bring justice to his creation (Lk. 1:46-55). John the baptizer's message blazed with the fire of God's passion for justice. Having convicted one audience by his prophetic judgment, a familiar question came back, "What then shall we do?" John's answer is crucial: "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise" (Lk. 3:7-11). The question is identical to that heard on Pentecost. First century Christians, particularly those converted on Pentecost, demonstrated they understood the answer to *both* questions. Baptism meant for them a radical pooling of resources to set in motion the church's first program to establish justice in fellowship. Justice occupied a position of centrality in the early church's faith system.

As could be expected, Jesus lived and taught as justice incarnate. He defined his entire ministry in terms of a consistent pursuit and realization of justice in his world (Lk. 4:16-21). Jesus told John's disciples about his agenda for justice to validate his

claim as Messiah (Lk. 7:18-23). Disciples learned even dinner invitations should be sent out according to a prescription of justice (Lk. 14:12-14). The parable of the rich man and Lazarus was told to challenge the apathetic affluent concerning the danger of wealth and the injustice of unconcern, not to placate the wretched of the earth, nor to sketch details concerning the state of the dead for future chart makers (Lk. 16:19-31). According to Jesus, final judgment for believers will be based on action or inaction taken in life on behalf of those who suffer unjustly (Mt. 25:31ff).

Justice and the Contemporary Church

American narcissistic culture and affluence obviously fly in the face of the Judeo-Christian heritage regarding justice in the world. More devastating is the fact that American values and cultural norms shape the churches of the Restoration tradition far more than those congregations prophetically challenge the society in which they exist. Church budgets, program plans, and individual priorities reflect an almost absolute ignorance of God's dream for his people in the twentieth century. Living as citizens of the richest nation in history, American Christians in Churches of Christ suffer from a "cruel innocence" (to borrow Michael Harrington's terminology) in relation to our knowledge of the real world. While 750,000,000 people live on annual incomes of \$75.00 or less and while from one-half to one billion people face life on starvation diets, Christians go about their activities as churchmen in a fantasy world. Piously believing Americans plunge into rabid campaigns fashioned by the ethics of single-issue politics. The cry is against abortion in a world where more children die daily of starvation and malnutrition than by abortion; the cry is for prayer in the public schools in a world which

"Living as citizens of the richest nation in history, American Christians in Churches of Christ suffer from a 'cruel innocence' in relation to our knowledge of the real world."

for the most part has no knowledge of the Lord who taught his followers to pray; the cry is for more defense spending in a world that now possesses three tons of T.N.T. for every person on earth. The present annual U.S. Defense budget exceeds the combined total annual income of the poorest one billion people on earth. The report of the Presidential Commission on world hunger (*Overcoming World Hunger: The Challenge Ahead*, March 1980) reveals shocking realities. United States development assistance to foreign underdeveloped nations (ODA)

totalled 5.7 billion dollars in 1978. By comparing ODA statistics with other expenditures, a valuable perspective emerges. In the same year, Americans spent in billions, \$30.9 for alcohol, \$17.9 for tobacco products, \$16.4 for household cleaning supplies, \$11.7 for toys and sports equipment, \$11.6 on foreign travel, \$9.3 on jewelry and watches, \$7.4 for admission to spectator amusements, and \$5.9 on barber shops and beauty parlors (p. 14, abridged version).

The time has arrived for a refocusing of priorities so that the Kingdom of God can be realized in the church's life. For the reign of God to break forth in the lives of believers today a new, holistic approach must be taken. New commitments, changes in life-style and community goals, and a rebirth of biblical, prophetic preaching must become realities for the church. Local congregations must rethink program agendas. Educational opportunities, mission strategy (foreign and domestic), youth ministry, social services, and even formal "worship" settings should be analyzed in view of a world crying for justice. Colleges/universities, publications, seminars and lectureships of our world-wide fellowship must be "invaded" by an urgent awareness of the connection between justice and faith. The political strength of our fellowship should be marshalled to the task of bringing relief to a hungry, oppressed world. Such would be a happy change of pace from the "knee-jerk" reactionism of past campaigns.

The problem of evil becomes disruptive at some point in the pilgrimage of every sensitive, thinking believer. Jack Nelson in a startling new book, *Hunger For Justice — the Politics of Food and Faith* (Orbis Books, 1980), recounts an experience he had in the streets of Calcutta. So overcome by rage

"The time has arrived for a refocusing of priorities so that the Kingdom of God can be realized in the church's life."

evoked from the pitiful sights of those death-draped streets, he confessed a desire to scream at God. Then came the painful realization: in the suffering of the poor, the sick, the dying, God screamed at him to do something as a person of faith. Until faith takes a radical, fearful first step toward justice in the real world it remains only prospective faith. Faith is born only in covenant with a longing for justice in real life. The church must develop a more realistic world view if it is to realize its claim of being truly Christian. Erasmus, in his *Enchiridion*, seems to have the last, definitive word:

A fellow member starves while you are belching the flesh of partridge, a naked brother shivers while your superfluous clothing goes to waste

by moth and dry rot . . . do you still think of yourself as a Christian when you are not even a man?

MISSION

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SEEKING JUSTICE IN MISSIONS



“To refuse to commit oneself to the social dimensions of the gospel or to excuse oneself from grappling with questions of social justice implementation is biblically irresponsible.”

By BOB DOUGLAS

Mission is not an afterthought with God. It is rooted in his very nature, for he is preeminently the God who goes forth. In the process of going forth, God enters into the world, there to communicate, adopt, adapt, redeem, and transform people and their cultures.

What God is all about and what mission is all about are one and the same. The whole of scripture is concerned with the story of God's mighty acts, missionary in nature. The whole of scripture thus breathes with mission concerns. It would be as legitimate to relegate God to an insignificant place in the Bible as it would be to reduce mission to a minor role in our understanding of holy writ.

But how is one to define “mission;” that is, what shall be included within the borders of the missionary enterprise and what shall be excluded? The natural human inclination has been either to make everything mission or almost nothing mission. Balance has not come easily.

More basic than balance is a serious reading of scripture resulting in a definition of mission which is

genuinely biblically informed. Over the past hundred years, however, the church's definition of mission has expanded or contracted in rhythm with world events, scientific discoveries, ideological evolution, and theological development.

A Holistic Perspective

But from the outset our missionary God has been concerned with the whole of his creation, a fact that necessitates the inclusion of social justice in a biblical definition of mission. Mankind's role as vice-regent over the world with responsibility for “dressing and keeping” the earth says as much about God's concern for the totality of his created realm as it does about man's uniqueness and preeminence in creation.

It is natural to assign significant tasks to significant people. From “the beginning” men and women have had a “cultural mandate” to shoulder — a responsibility toward the world with all of its systems and expressions. How biblically shortsighted it is to limit these cultural responsibilities to sentimentalistic pre-fall garden spading and flower pruning. God's original theocracy was concerned with every dimension of life, actual and anticipated,

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social, economic, and political, for human life does not exist apart from such dynamics whatever designating label one attaches. God, through Christ, created the visible, semi-visible, and invisible for his own purposes. What God creates, God is concerned about.

The fall did not alter God's intentions or erase his concern for his world any more than it terminated his commitment to the individual or the family.

“The church, the facilitator of the kingdom, must give itself to the task of transforming life, however slow, painful, and frustrating the assignment may be, however imperfect the end product may appear.”

Obviously the fall complicated the fullest realization of God's purposes. All creation was skewed by Adam's act. The natural world was subjected to “futility.” Relations involving power, authority, resources, property, distribution, group and individual relations, *ad infinitum* were corrupted/changed for the worse. Social, economic, and political relations were bent out of shape. The world suffered at both the collective and individual levels. Relationships of all kinds were soiled. The “principalities” created by Christ for Christ (and man) [Col. 1:16] were so corrupted as to need rectification along with people.

The chaos reintroduced into the world through the fall did not nullify the cultural mandate. In fact, it intensified its importance. Because of the fall the raw material of life was so radically altered that a new creative act by God was required, namely, his redemptive activity in Christ's death and resurrection, events which made possible a new creation. In Jesus Christ, God's “outgoing” (missionary) nature manifested itself most graphically. God would not withdraw from his world or allow any part of it to remain under the aegis of sin. Christ's redemptive mission was to have a positive impact on every dimension of fallen life. What was askew was to be set right, if not immediately, eventually and in totality. A start was to be made and a process pursued which would reach its culmination in Christ's second coming.

What is wrong with God's world? Many things. The prophets pointed to systemic as well as individual evil. Corruptions tended to permeate every facet of life rendering it less than holy. God's men of the Spirit were concerned with ultimate loyalty and its implications for justice, government, economics, human rights, and social relationships. The prophets denounced Israel for her failure to take seriously her ethical and religious role as light unto the nations.

They spoke with equal vigor against the nations for their social, ethical, and religious lapses. God expected people outside the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants to behave according to some basic standards of decency. Throughout the Old Testament God never surrendered the nations to the evil one to focus solely on Israel. In like manner he never surrendered his concern for the whole of life for “souls” alone. Social justice is foundational within Old Testament revelation.

Jesus' public ministry, carried on in the light of the prophets, added to God's revelation concerning the holistic nature of missions. Jesus' fundamental message in the synoptics, the announcement of the beginning of the realization of the kingdom of God, points graphically to mission as a multifaceted endeavor. To limit the intent of Jesus in Luke 4 through allegorizing the text is to do violence to the prophets upon whom Jesus drew. It is to ignore the whole tenor of Jesus' miracles as living demonstrations of kingdom purposes and power. Through Christ God's sovereign reign was being reasserted in the world. Where mission is carried out today in Christ's name, a similar breadth of concern must exist if one hopes to be true to the tenor of scripture.

Sin is everywhere. It resides in people and in structures. Its impact is seen in nature as well as in the principalities and powers which were intended to be bearers of order and cohesion in life. Wherever sin has gone, whatever its form, however overt or subtle

“Too often, in seeking social justice, one must settle for ‘lesser evils,’ tentative conclusions, or half a loaf. In the face of this, it sometimes seems ‘safer’ to ‘just preach the gospel.’ ”

its manifestation, God would have his people challenge it and seek to minimize its influence if not totally overcome it. His church, the facilitator of the kingdom, must give itself to the task of transforming life, however slow, painful, and frustrating the assignment may be, however imperfect the end product may appear.

Evangelism Alone?

Mission has not always been seen as this all encompassing. Customarily conservative Christian groups have defined their task in terms of evangelism. More recently a commitment to church planting has been verbalized. Disaster relief efforts have been undertaken on occasion. Sometimes a more broadly based social service program is

included. Within the last two decades a few have added developmental activities. Concern for justice, an area which involves questions of human rights and basic social structures, has been largely ignored. The one exception is the World Council of Churches which has tended to ignore evangelism and church planting while advocating social reform without strong supernaturalistic underpinning. Responsible, biblically informed mission requires proclamation, relief, service development, and social justice, all interwoven in the unfolding of the missionary task.

Questions about prioritization, who should address what social issues, and how the gospel should be brought to bear on the whole of society are questions of strategy and resource allocation. While they are vital, they are not the issue under discussion now. What is being argued, rather, is the biblical necessity of conceptualizing mission as a holistic enterprise. For mission to be biblically responsible it must incorporate development and social justice into its overall design as surely as it incorporates evangelism, church planting, and relief efforts. To refuse to commit oneself to the social dimensions of the gospel or to excuse oneself from grappling with questions of social justice implementation is biblically irresponsible.

Unfortunately the whole subject of social justice in mission can precipitate an emotionally charged negative response on the part of believers. Holistic missions have sustained repeated attacks as "liberal," "secular," or "social gospel," the worst of epitaphs. Such attacks are a smokescreen. The mission herein advocated is far removed from nineteenth century social gospel assumptions regarding man, scripture, history, society, and the nature of sin. Holistic mission likewise has roots and resources very different from those utilized by contemporary non-supernaturalistic agencies engaged in efforts at social engineering.

Saving souls is tremendously important. However, to assume that saving souls automatically leads to changes in the essential nature of any society is naive. Much of the history of Christianity shows that systemic problems must be specifically addressed as systemic problems—from a Christian perspective—if they are to be solved. Yet it continues to be tempting to assume injustice will pass away as the consequence of godly influence "trickling down" (or up!) from individual believers. When such a perspective persists in the face of contrary information one must wonder whether the church has been seduced (unknowingly) by a number of popular American myths—many of which are questionable biblically and empirically.

Part of the difficulty in coming to grips with injustice, whether in the mission field or at home, is the very magnitude and subtlety of the problem.

Likewise the social sciences, whose insights must play some role in social analysis, are the object of deeply ingrained suspicion when brought to bear on "religious" questions. Add to this the fact that solutions seem to defy ready and clear assessment, let alone implementation, and avoidance or denial is simply easier. Too often, in seeking social justice it seems one must settle for "lesser evils," tentative conclusions, or half a loaf. Where one's history and hermeneutical approach demand the possibility and necessity of clear cut, either/or options, to be left dangling with a less-than-certain answer is most uncomfortable. It is "safer" to "just preach the gospel."

The author would deny there is one specific "Christian position" in response to the increasingly

"Responsible, biblically informed mission requires proclamation, relief, service, development, and social justice, all interwoven in the unfolding of the missionary task."

complex problems of today's world. Given the limited insights of the brightest people, room must be left for variation in strategy and solution. In fact, answers must be contextualized, that is, worked out from within the local setting, drawing upon indigenous thought, approaches, and assumptions regarding society and the application of scripture to it.

Conclusion

The problems associated with incorporating justice concerns into mission are many, and yet God's heart continues to pulse with a longing for a more wholesome world, one wherein his kingdom in all of its implications is more completely realized. The church, God's instrument for bringing the kingdom into fuller being, must act faithfully by embodying justice, proclaiming justice, and promoting justice. Our challenge in response to the heart of God, carried out in the midst of the world, must be multidimensional. God's people must become more aware of God's concern, sensitize themselves to injustice, prepare themselves to analyze social needs in the light of the kingdom of God in progress, equip themselves to respond effectively to unjust situations, train themselves experientially in these areas, encourage believers world-wide to deal with justice questions, and actually implement a more thorough-going justice through personal life style, congregational modeling, and risky action. Without these dimensions, mission is inadequately concerned and imperfectly carried out. _____MISSION

GO YE: PREACH AND HEAL?



“For Jesus, health care and evangelism went hand in hand. ‘And Jesus was going about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness’”

By **ROGER McCOWN**, **ELLIE EVANS**, and **ROBERT T. CLARK**

When Jesus sent his disciples out the first time, “He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Lk. 9:2). “So they set out and went from village to village preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere” (Lk. 9:6).

There are many examples in scripture where Jesus touched the lives of people with both spiritual and physical healing (Mt. 14:14-21, 9:28-31, 8:16-17). He attracted people in many cases by caring for immediate and pressing needs. Sometimes these needs were physical (Mt. 9:20-22, 8:14-15) and sometimes they were spiritual (Mt. 9:2-8, Mk. 2:4-5), but he actively responded to the needs of the whole man.

The most important mission of all Christians is to share the good news of God’s love that was made manifest through Jesus Christ. “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life” (Jn. 3:14-15). Our job is to lift him

up so those who want to see and to be healed of their sins can do so.

But in lifting him up, we need to do more than say, “Be ye warmed and filled,” if people are really to believe that we care as he did. Christ made this responsibility clear in Mt. 25:31-40:

Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothed you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?” The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did

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for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

For Jesus, health care and evangelism went hand in hand. “And Jesus was going about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness, and seeing the multitudes He had compassion on them. . . . Then He said to His disciples, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest” (Mt. 9:35-38).

“ . . . He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (I Cor. 5:19-20). But before a man can respond to the message of reconciliation he must hear, realize his spiritual need, and comprehend God’s gift. The process of comprehending is made easier if he can see and feel God’s love through compassionate ministries that reflect Christ in us.

A Biblical View of Health

Our Western view of health is problem oriented and centered on the physical person. The biblical concept involves wholeness and overall welfare with the bodily condition being only one aspect.

For the Christian, health as wholeness is rooted in the Hebrew word, *shalom* (peace), which means a great deal more than the absence of war. It involves an ideal condition of material and spiritual well being and signifies prosperity in relation to both God and man. This meaning is apparent in Gen. 29:6 when Jacob asked about Laban’s health, and was shown the family and flock as a sign of his prosperity.

Scripture teaches that sin interrupts this wholeness (Jer. 6:13-14; Ps. 38:3,7). Isaiah indicates that the path to perfect *shalom*, or wholeness, lies in keeping our hearts fixed on God (Is. 26:3). And the New Testament indicates that this wholeness is an essential characteristic of the Messianic Kingdom (Acts 10:36, Eph. 2:17-18).

Our clearest insight into the meaning of health for Christian missions is seen in the personal ministry of Jesus himself. He clearly associated health, healing, and wholeness in Mk. 5:34. After telling the early believers to live in wholeness (II Cor. 13:11), Paul affirmed that Jesus is the agent of wholeness (Col. 3:15).

In our Western view of health, we have penalized ourselves by believing we are healthy and at peace when all we have achieved is the absence of war or the alleviation of some physical malady. But wholeness (*shalom*) involves all areas of our lives —

spiritual, physical, mental, and social. True health, from a biblical perspective, is dependent not only on the absence of physical malady, but also on a basic moral righteousness. No man is ultimately healthy who is only physically healthy.

Medical Missions in Guatemala

An effort currently is being made to combine health care and evangelism in Guatemala. Sponsored by several congregations of Churches of Christ, this effort presently involves two physicians with Dr.

“In our Western view of health, we have penalized ourselves by believing we are healthy and at peace when all we have achieved is the absence of war or the alleviation of some physical malady.”

Robert Clark as director of medical work, seven nurses, four evangelists, one medical laboratory technician, one public health researcher, and one school teacher. Roger McCown is resident director of the overall mission program.

Guatemala was chosen as the site for several reasons. The first was the rich evangelistic potential. The Las Cruces area has many characteristics which have, historically, produced fertile fields for evangelism. There is a high rate of migration to the area, creating social and economic factors which favor innovation, i.e., the culture is “change-oriented.” A survey conducted in 1978 found a large body of people not affiliated with any organized religious group. This survey also indicated that the people of Las Cruces would give the gospel a friendly hearing.

Another consideration was the fact that Guatemala is readily accessible from the United States. The flying time from New Orleans to Guatemala City is about three hours, and the cost of a round trip ticket from New Orleans is usually less than \$350.00. This is an important factor when considering that students of evangelism and health care will be traveling to the center for experience.

A third factor was the interest shown by the Guatemalan government. In late 1977 the Minister of Health recommended the community of Las Cruces as the site. Las Cruces is a rapidly developing farming community in the west-central portion of the state. It had its beginning in 1972 and has grown from an initial population of about twenty-four to approximately 15,000 people in 1981. This growth is a result of migration of people from the more populated mountain and coastal regions of the country to the northern rain forest where land has been made available through a government

homestead program. A similar situation in the mid-1800's in the United States led to rapid church growth.

A fourth factor was the environmental setting and the associated health problems. The tropical climate and the diseases that flourish there are much the same as in many other developing countries of the world. The major health problems include dysentery, amoebiasis, enteritis, pneumonia, malaria, obstetrical complications, measles, whooping cough, and malnutrition, which are problems in most

"The large majority of the world's people has too little food, little or no health care, and has never heard of God's plan of salvation for their lives."

developing countries.

The spiritual problems are those common to mankind. However, the close relation that prevails

between physical problems and spiritual problems in the minds of many of these people, causes them to be even more responsive to spiritual problems than in many other regions.

Summary

As never before in history, Christians are confronted with a hungry, sick, lonely, and lost world. Mass media and increasing world travel bring us face to face with the fact that the large majority of the world's people has too little food, little or no health care, and has never heard of God's plan of salvation for their lives.

Many will say, "Someone should do something." A few will ask, "What can be done?" Fewer still will say, "Here am I, send me."

When those few do ask, "How can I help?" or when someone stands ready for service, what then? The medical mission effort in Guatemala is at least one attempt to achieve a holistic approach in missions, responding to the command of the Lord to both "preach and heal."

MISSION

Editor's Note: For more information on medical missions, write:
Dr. Charles Bates, Health Talents International, Inc.
c/o Cahaba Valley Church of Christ, 5199 Caldwell Mill Road, Birmingham, AL 35244.

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THE MISSION TRAINING AND RESOURCE CENTER: A BOLD ADVENTURE IN EVANGELISM



“MTRC envisions missions as a multifaceted undertaking which ultimately must include social concerns such as relief, development, and social justice, as well as proclamation, church planting, and discipling.”

By **BOB DOUGLAS**

The Mission Training and Resource Center (MTRC) is a team of non-denominational Christians joined in the task of assisting in spreading the gospel to every nation. MTRC has a strong association with the Churches of Christ; at the same time it is committed to the ideal of early American “restorationists” — “Christians only, but not the only Christians!”

Part of the originality and *raison d'être* for MTRC lies in its holistic approach to the task of missions, its primary focus on unreached peoples, and its commitment to the contextualization of the gospel wherever it is preached. This commitment to holism means that MTRC envisions missions as a multifaceted undertaking which ultimately must include social concerns such as relief, development, and social justice, as well as proclamation, church planting, and discipling. These facets, when carefully integrated with a biblically informed, culturally sensitive approach, provide a basic statement of what mission must be in today's world.

Current missiological terminology speaks of “unreached peoples,” that is, ethno-linguistic groups who have no culturally relevant Christian witness in their midst. Missions research indicates the existence

of thousands of such groups. The majority of these people groups are made up of adherents to some form of Hinduism, Islam, Chinese ideology or religion, or a tribal-animistic outlook. MTRC's leaders believe that evangelistic efforts among the unreached are of paramount importance to the unfolding of God's ultimate purposes. MTRC is convinced that responding to the unique challenges presented by unreached peoples calls for sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, imaginative strategizing, and careful and non-traditional preparation due to our extreme cultural distance from these peoples. MTRC's vision is one of participating in pioneering missions.

Contextualization, for MTRC, is more than a current missiological catch-word. In addition to involving missionaries in the host culture at every conceivable level, it also requires freeing national believers to interpret and apply Jesus' message to their own cultural setting in keeping with their own perceptions of truth as led by the Holy Spirit. This approach allows for the reality of dynamic Christianity while respecting the integrity of believers everywhere. A basic assumption is at work here, namely, that there are few, if any, sacred forms that can or should be transferred from one culture to another (including those forms found in biblical cultures). It is further assumed that believers within

Bob Douglas, a ten-year missionary in the Middle East, is Vice-President for Research and Training at the Mission Training and Resource Center, Pasadena, California.

each culture know best what the gospel means and demands in that culture, and that they will develop that perspective, given freedom in Christ.

MTRC's Basic Goals

Given this framework of holism, unreached peoples, and contextualization, MTRC's basic purposes are twofold: 1) to provide highly professional and respected research and writing as a foundation for informed missions, and 2) to provide timely, appropriate training for sponsoring churches, missionary candidates, and missionaries on the field. MTRC was deliberately located in Pasadena, Calif., since the Pasadena area is perhaps the major focal point for missions research, strategy, and training in North America.

MTRC is concerned to avoid duplicating the efforts of institutions and organizations already

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making important contributions to world missions. By establishing fraternal ties with as many resources as possible, MTRC seeks to coordinate all phases of the mission enterprise: field selection, preparation for entry, training of sponsoring congregations, candidate selection and pre-field training; building good church-missionary relationships; in-field training and consultation services; and continued research, evaluation, and revision of the entire process. Because these aims require a highly efficient, scholarly, creative and disciplined approach, MTRC seeks to bring together a staff combining theological and missiological training, varied cross-cultural experience, practical life involvement, and expertise in the social sciences.

The four men who currently function at the executive level reflect these unique purposes. Ken Ross (a Ph.D. candidate in Ethnotheology at Fuller Seminary) brings a great deal of theological acumen and a strong business background to MTRC. Because of this he demanded the utilization of solid theological insights and the best techniques of educational design and development in the creation of goal oriented training materials for use with a medical team working in northern Guatemala (see previous article). A survey of mission related organizations indicates that none operates consistently in this manner. Phil Elkins (a Ph.D. candidate in Missiology at Fuller Seminary) participated in a precedent setting team approach to missions in Zambia.

The Zambia team effort has served as a model for dozens of aspiring missionaries. Elkins has taught in missionary training programs at half a dozen institutions.

Bob Douglas (Ph.D. in Social Ethics) combines extensive pastoral experience and deep social concern with nearly ten years spent in the Middle East. He has participated in pioneering efforts at contextualizing the gospel for a Muslim setting. Tim McKee (Ph.D. in Religious Education, Ed.D. candidate at Pepperdine) directs MTRC's business affairs out of a background of many years in Christian School administration. His expertise in educational psychology has enabled MTRC to develop an elaborate evaluation procedure to determine the effectiveness of missionary training at cognitive, behavioral, and affective levels. This process, which previously has never been seriously undertaken, is now being field tested. Others associated with MTRC hold advanced degrees in intercultural communications, mass media, educational technology, sociology, and anthropology. In almost every case, academic achievement has been supplemented with cross cultural ministry.

The Role of Research

MTRC's commitment to research and writing is not intended to produce "ivory tower" tomes. The end product of MTRC's research will be portfolios of materials written in layman's language which enable concerned Christians to arrive at informed conclusions regarding where and how to invest their lives and resources in missions. By this means, MTRC seeks to contribute to responsible decision making in the Christian community and, thereby, to the growth of the kingdom of God. Solid, down-to-earth missions strategy is possible only when meaningful data, correctly interpreted, is integrated into the planning-praying process. Too often Christian mission organizations have been careless in the design and development of their programs due in part to the neglect of serious research. The way many Christian groups have selected mission fields exemplifies the negligence under discussion.

Preliminary studies done by an MTRC associate show that mission fields are often selected with little regard to indications of God's activity in preparing people to hear his message. God's people, as discerning servants, ought to attempt to read "the signs of the times" within the socio-cultural context of specific peoples, and act responsibly in the light of what God may already be doing. Seeing God's hand in the affairs of people is tricky at best — yet occasionally it seems to be possible through thoughtful analysis of cultural, social, economic, and religious factors. To ignore data of this kind leaves missions with only one alternative in field selection:

going it alone on blind chance or a hunch. And this is precisely what has happened too often. People have involved themselves in particular countries on a whim. A more responsible approach focuses on unreached, responsive (God prepared) peoples.

MTRC is fully aware of the tendency of Christians, churches, and missions to adopt the latest current pop religious jargon, for example, "church growth" or "unreached peoples." Frequently there blossoms a new round of clinics, workshops, and seminars touting the current "in" ideas; too often, in the end, the status quo is everywhere maintained, except in methodological vocabulary. In mission circles several organizations are promoting the idea of adopting a "hidden" or "unreached" people. Few organizations, however, are prepared to specifically name, describe in detail, and otherwise prepare plans for ministry among unreached, responsive peoples. The temptation to be content with sloganeering regarding unreached people is great. MTRC is determined to reject promotional fanfare in favor of basic research.

The barriers to meaningful research resulting in useful descriptions of "unreached, responsive peoples" are formidable—time, insightful researches of a practical bent, a network of trustworthy contacts or informants, access to the "real situation," suitable interpretive grids, to say nothing of extensive financial resources earmarked for such laborious work. Few Christian organizations have the inclination or the resources to follow through with

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the kind of research needed. MTRC, however, is committed to the task, believing that research in field selection and other areas of the missionary undertaking are the indispensable, basic building blocks of God-tuned missions.

Missionary Training

Missionary training is another primary concern. Pre-field candidate training, one type of training within missions, illustrates the kinds of concerns that occupy the Resource Center. MTRC appreciates current, pre-field missionary candidate training efforts. They are growing both in number and sophistication. However, most could benefit from a different focus and format, specifically a hardy

injection of practical, experientially centered, learning activities. It is a simple fact that many of the skills people develop are the result of participation in a tightly integrated combination of hearing, seeing, and doing. Proficiency in vocations such as medicine, counseling, or architecture or in pastimes like golf, swimming, or flying demand that book knowledge be supplemented with guided practice. Unfortunately, ministry and missions, with their professed concern with people-centered problems, are vocations where one can "arrive" professionally

"While the local church 'ought' to be the initiator, leader, and innovator in missions, it frequently is not. It is more often the poor victim of a spiritual mugging."

without serious practical training experience under knowledgeable supervision. The difficulty of developing real cross-cultural sensitivity and accompanying ministry skills out of books, combined with the seriousness of the task of ministering God's *shalom* relevantly in a broken, pluralistic world demands that training more suitable to the situation be devised.

Few experientially centered training models for missionary candidates exist in American Christianity. Some that do exist (Wycliffe, New Tribes Mission) are not practically open to outside people; others focus on only one aspect of experiential training (for example, survival skills), thus failing to integrate the wider implications of the kingdom of God into training activities. Summer internships, while occasionally helpful, are seriously deficient experiences.

Training activities attached to colleges and universities seem unable to break out of the traditional classroom centered model. Included in the barriers colleges face in providing the model of experiential training needed are accreditation demands, economic factors, time and scheduling requirements, absence of diverse socio-cultural contexts, and the pressure of the general academic situation.

MTRC, enjoying a unique administrative and financial autonomy, is unencumbered by traditional educational constraints. Thus, it proposes to provide what others find difficulty in doing. A program of pre-field training is envisioned, building on the best of current secular and non-secular models. Such a program would incorporate experiences in spiritual formation, incarnational identification, survival skills, and church planting within a challenging ethnic setting. MTRC is developing a carefully orchestrated series of learning experiences which

combine theoretical insight and immediate practical application under the guidance of experienced, effective, cross-cultural workers. These activities are designed to contribute to down-to-earth understanding of culture, rapid personal adjustment, and acculturation on the field and effective ministry. Each cycle of training activities will include interaction with another culture, careful sociological analysis of that culture, the development of language acquisition skills, evangelism, and assistance in applying one's own spiritual resources to solving the problems, frustrations, and temptations which arise from a cross cultural ministry.

The concentration of large ethnic enclaves in the Los Angeles area, making it the most cosmopolitan community in the world, provides a natural, easy-to-reach primary context for live-in training. London, with its multiracial neighborhoods, offers an additional urban training site, while the developing frontier of northern Guatemala affords a matchless rural setting. MTRC has already entered into a working relationship with a team of urban missionaries in London (see *Mission Journal*, January, 1981) and the Center for Medical Mission Training in Guatemala (see previous article) for the express purpose of providing alternative training sites.

The local American church plays a crucial role in the process of cross-cultural witnessing. Sometimes that role takes the form of a stifling influence, or one of distant banker, or that of a broker of western culture, or a begrudging paternalist. Sometimes churches are moved largely by guilt or pride, or are victimized by glib salesmen hawking their latest project.

The American church ought to be the birthplace of rich missionary passion and a full partner in missions education strategizing motivation, communication, and spiritual sustenance. The local church ought to see itself and its ministries defined by a biblical theology of mission. While it "ought" to be the initiator, leader, and innovator in missions, it frequently is not. It is more often the poor victim of a spiritual mugging. Missions often are relegated to stepchild status, with the result that the local church's "program" (local and otherwise) is terribly impoverished.

Local Church Seminars

MTRC is committed to the idea that there are better ways. MTRC is taking steps to assist interested congregations in changing the tragic image and effect of misshaped missions. A series of weekend seminars is being developed along with pre-seminar and post-seminar follow up materials. These seminars are designed to bring a congregation face to face with its responsibility to be a missions oriented church and to live accordingly. Issues of personal involvement, gifts, lifestyle, the aim of missions, strategies, resources, and appropriate outcomes are addressed. With a little assistance, concerned congregations can develop their own mission and ministry programs in ways that will enrich the entire membership, result in local growth, and service and increase the number of disciples around the world.

The MTRC staff believes that each of the areas referred to is vital to the kind of missions that are responsible before God and responsive to the world in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

MISSION

Editor's note: MTRC exists to serve churches. For further information, write:
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VIEWING THE CHURCH OF CHRIST FROM JAIL



"As a prison chaplain, I have been not only 'a part' of the Church of Christ, but also to a certain extent 'apart,' as I worked with other religious groups as well. This latter 'distance' has left me with a deeper and renewed appreciation for the benefits and advantages of our particular religious heritage."

by MICHAEL GOSE

In his book, *The Courage to Be*, Paul Tillich makes a distinction I refer to as the courage to be a part and the courage to be apart. In the former instance, the individual has the courage to be a part of the group. In the latter instance, the individual has the courage also to stand alone. For some time I have admired *Mission Journal's* commitment to publish the voices of those who have stood apart from the group, while still maintaining a role that is "a part" of the Church of Christ. In a master's thesis for Pepperdine University, I cited the particular courage of a number of articles from *Mission Journal* which dealt, during the late 1960's and the early 1970's, with the racial issue.

As a person who appreciates constructive criticism (even if sometimes begrudgingly), I also recognize the need to build up the body by citing its strengths, successes, accomplishments. Having spent six years as the Chaplain Co-ordinator of an "interdenominational" county jail program, I feel prompted to write from my somewhat unusual perspective. As a prison chaplain, I have been not only "a part" of the Church of Christ, but also to a certain extent "apart," as I worked with other religious groups as well. This latter "distance" has left me with a deeper and renewed appreciation for the benefits and advantages of our particular religious heritage.

In trying to define those benefits and advantages, I have identified twelve characteristics of the church which have made noticeable impressions on me. I

cannot account for why my list was not shorter or longer. The list simply grew from one to twelve and stopped at that point. Each of these twelve characteristics of the church has substantially contributed to my own prison ministry.

1) The Church of Christ takes the word of God seriously. Jesus says to visit the prisons, and my own congregation — the Redwood City Church of Christ — took the command literally. It was the congregation's interest in the jail ministry that led to my own extensive involvement. The jail, the church, and the entire community have benefited from Christians taking the word seriously.

2) The church as an organized group of believers provides a nucleus of leaders and disciples who can be moved to accomplishments far beyond the efforts of individuals operating alone. In this instance, prodding and encouragement by Charles Coulston, the minister of the Redwood City congregation, was both essential and sufficient to the establishment of church services at each jail facility in the county.

3) Because the Church of Christ adopts the biblically inspired ideas of the "priesthood of all believers" and a "lay clergy," the Church of Christ was uniquely able to provide Christian service in the jails. Whereas many other religious groups were unable to send anyone because all their ministers were involved in church on Sundays, the Church of Christ had a

Michael Gose is a professor of education in Seaver College, Pepperdine University, Malibu, California.

well-trained clergy consisting of each of its members who had been prepared to minister, in this case taking the Good News to the jails.

4) Akin to the idea of the “lay clergy” is the decentralized structure among Churches of Christ. When the opportunity to meet a need in jail arises, the time to act is “now.” Our congregation did not have to go through bureaucratic layers of organization to gain approval, permission, and direction to spread God’s word. Involvement was immediate and thus timely. (And it was also expedient that we were trained in a capella singing, since it was so difficult to get any music into the jail at all.)

“Jesus says to visit the prisons, and my own congregation took the command literally. It was the congregation’s interest in the jail ministry that led to my own extensive involvement.”

5) The Church of Christ emphasizes fellowship. Churches I have attended have usually met as long outside the church building after worship as inside during worship. That fellowship turns out to be great training for the personal dynamics necessary for successful jail work. The church was most effective in establishing personal relationships with inmates and encouraging those same inmates to continue that fellowship in church on the outside.

6) Within the Church of Christ we have traditionally talked about hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptised. Confession is perhaps the most radical and meaningful of this list to inmates in a jail. In an era of overworked courts and plea bargaining, the general rule is “don’t admit to anything”; there’s a good chance of getting off because of insufficient evidence or pleading guilty to a lesser offense. That may be practical in court, but it is not a useful way of dealing with personal guilt. The church’s emphasis on confession, to God if not in court, was beneficial to the mental well-being of many of the inmates.

7) The Church of Christ preaches the principle of “restoration.” The Restoration Movement is a true “back to basics” movement — the basics of the first-century church. Men and women in jail are desperate for basics. The simple message of the Good News, and the service and fellowship of Christians, are instrumental in restoring sinners (both inmates and volunteers) to God.

8) The Church of Christ emphasizes the Bible. In a

typical jail the turnover rate of an inmate is less than four days. In a jail you might get only one chance to help that person. That leaves little or no room for heavy religious indoctrination or time on denominational issues. The Bibles brought and given to inmates gave them a non-denominational road map by which to chart their own future courses. Interestingly, given the time constraints and the high turnover rate, virtually every denomination visiting the jail came to an increasing emphasis on personal Bible study.

9) The emphasis of Churches of Christ on baptism by immersion is also emphasis on a “new life.” Raising one’s hand as a sign of faith, a private prayer of confession, and sprinkling — all these other initiation rites pale in comparison to the profound, dramatic, and symbolic event of baptism into the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When an inmate wants to make a powerful change in his/her life, this decision calls for the kind of experience which baptism by immersion both symbolizes and supports.

10) The Church of Christ has regular meeting times. If you are trying to make it one step at a time, as are many inmates, the regular meeting times of the church are essential to making it through a week.

11) Frankly, I have often been critical of a tendency toward legalism in the Church of Christ, particularly with reference to social behavior — dancing, fighting, smoking, reckless driving, gambling, sex, alcohol, and drugs. But the potential destructiveness of those potential vices shows its evidence in our jails. My reaction when working in the jail (perhaps as compared to my more sophisticated social milieu outside jail) is that my mom and my church warned me well. The courage to refrain from social drinking, the courage to attend church in jail, and the courage to resist peer pressure — all of these are important determinations for inmates attempting to begin again.

“Our congregation did not have to go through bureaucratic layers of organization to gain approval, permission, and direction to spread God’s word.”

12) The church’s appreciation for the Judeo-Christian history and heritage was, to my mind, an important ingredient for jail work. There is no average inmate in jail. The population is incredibly diverse. But the person arrested needs roots, a heritage, and a history that makes sense and can sustain “new life.” This is something the church can offer.

And now, belatedly, my caveats. No, the Church of Christ is not unique in each of these dimensions. Nor am I blind to some institutional liabilities which some of these same advantages imply (e.g., by being so decentralized we often are not in jails and prisons

at all, despite the Lord's admonition to be there). But if there is a time and place for everything, this is my time to pay homage to the church and to thank the Redwood City Church of Christ for involving me and for being involved with me in a ministry to our jails.

MISSION

Reflections On An Unlikely Prophet

"In keeping with his namesake, this troubler of Israel could disturb the comfort and sleep of all within earshot. More than once I crawled out of a cozy bed on a cold night to silence him, only to hear him renew his oracle as I pulled the blankets back up around me."

By DON CRITTENDEN

This is the chronicle of an unlikely prophet named Micah. Not the Old Testament personage, but a dog who owned my wife Ann and me for four years. Of mixed parentage, his black fur with a white ring around his neck made him appear to be a border collie, but his most distinguishing characteristics were a tongue three sizes too large for his mouth and piercing eyes which demanded attention.

He came to us when we went to a holiday gathering of friends. We fell for the line, "If you don't take him, we'll have to send him to the pound." As I tried to say "No" gracefully, I realized my wife was of no help at all. Admitting defeat, I decided that a dog of mine would have personality. He did. At feeding time, he distinguished himself by placing both front feet in the garbage can lid that served as a table for him and his nine siblings. With such obviouschutzpah, it was obvious that he was my unmistakable choice. He also had a weak stomach, for on the way home he lost his hastily-eaten supper on the floorboard of my car.

From the first, I was determined to prove who was in charge, and he was happy to oblige. No amount of scolding, spanking, or harsh methods succeeded in communicating to him the fundamental difference between a house and a yard. His idea of house-breaking was to use his bushy tail as a wrecking ball

upon hapless pieces of glassware. I gave up this ill-chosen enterprise after he mistook our stereo cabinet for a fireplug!

A friend had named his dog Amos, and not to be outdone, I fastened "Micah" upon my new-found companion, in memory of another Old Testament prophet. Little else about him fit the description, "minor." Certainly not his barking, for he could "prophesy" for thirty minutes, unbroken by a pause for breath. In keeping with his namesake, this troubler of Israel could disturb the comfort and sleep of all within earshot. More than once I crawled out of a cozy bed on a cold night to silence him, only to hear him renew his oracle as I pulled the blankets back up around me.

His morning routine never varied. As quickly as his keen reconnaissance system detected life inside the house, he began to leap against the back windows and to speak sharply to us of his urgent desire for breakfast. Needless to say, our windows were never chosen for a Windex commercial.

For all of Micah's faults, he had one supreme virtue. He gave and received tirelessly. Before his first birthday, he mastered the skill for which he achieved a measure of both fame and notoriety. He learned to sit atop the fence in our front yard and, like a regal monarch, hold court with a steady stream of students pausing to pay homage to his majesty. Since our house was situated on a main street close to the Middle Tennessee State University campus, he

Don Crittenden is Campus Minister of the Student Christian Fellowship, a campus ministry sponsored by Churches of Christ at the University of Texas, Austin.

was seldom without visitors. Students who cherished fond memories of their own pets found a willing recipient for their displaced affections.

To see him hold court with three or four students awaiting their turn with his majesty was to realize that he was equal parts con-man and king. More than once, passers-by, thinking him stuck in the fence, would stop to disengage him only to blink in surprise as he nonchalantly leapt from his perch and looked at them in wide-eyed innocence. Having asserted his independence, he ascended once more to his throne and greeted them warmly.

Micah would have retained his fiefdom for years had Ann and I not chosen to move to Texas. The length of our move and the fact that we were forced

“Of all of Micah’s stubborn, willful ways, none were more lasting than the loyalty of his love. His indiscriminating show of affection mocks the reserve with which I imitate Silas Marner in doling out my love, lest some of it be ill-used or wasted.”

to live in an apartment meant that we had no place for a dog, no matter how noble his pretensions. No one would accept responsibility for him. Those who had facilities chose not to take him and those who wanted him had no place. Our move became imminent, our desperation increased. Finally, a student agreed to take him, although it meant he would have to be chained rather than given the relative freedom of a fence. This was an unsatisfactory solution, but we saw little choice. We would go and he would stay. So, bidding a sad farewell to a good friend, we left him in competent hands.

Not long ago, I learned that Micah died during the summer, a victim of the heat. I confess that I shed tears for Micah, for despite any illusions to the contrary, I loved that dog and he loved me. He came to me at a time when I was gripped in the struggle of living in a place I did not want to be and with people with whom I often felt ill at ease. Having recently left graduate school, it took time and effort to re-adapt to a world where term papers did not dominate one’s horizon. Equally important, having lived in a library for two years, I had learned to stifle genuine feelings of affection and caring. He was both an outlet for affection and a model for loving all comers. The term “puppy love” took on totally unexpected connotations as I learned how to give and receive love more easily from persons.

As in any other grief, this one has a touch of guilt. Why had I forsaken him to the chain and a backyard

that was far from the beaten path? Intellectually, I accept the realities that demanded our finding a new home for Micah. There is, however, a “still small voice” that whispers hauntingly, “Traitor!” Perhaps it is not so much the loss of a pet as it is the deeper truth that our patterns of behavior in one area of our lives overflow into other, more important categories of living. Jesus himself said, “He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; he who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.” The decision to leave a pet and the decision to forsake a life partner may spring from the common denominator of convenience, a fact that gives us pause. In our bump-and-run culture which glorifies mobility, perhaps we need to be sure that the cry of personal growth and maturity does not become a cloak for our unwillingness to keep alive the deepest of human relationships even at the cost of inconvenience and hardship. There are times when the realities of living constrict those relationships, but it is imperative for one to discern the difference between necessity and convenience.

Second, I marvel that I can have such deep feelings for a dog, a being according to Christian faith that has no eternal destiny. Jesus, however, saw in his Father’s care of birds and lilies no misplaced concern, but rather incontrovertible evidence of the worth of human beings. If a dog can win such deep affection from us, how can we withhold our compassion and caring from those creatures who mirror the image of their Creator?

In some ways it is easier to love a pet than to love a person. Perhaps it is because pets are non-judgmental in their patterns of loving. They are unskilled in social climbing, and do not make irrelevant demands regarding class or color. Likewise, their love is non-threatening. One does not

“If Balaam could learn lessons from an obstinate ass, I am not too proud to accept the wisdom of a dog. Like his more orthodox counterpart in the Old Testament, out of his message issues both comfort and challenge.”

have to be on good behavior to enjoy a dog. It is no wonder that the lonely person finds in an animal a degree of consolation that is seemingly unavailable from human beings. On the other hand, which of them are described as having been created in the image of God?

Finally, I salute Micah for his loving spirit. Of all his stubborn, willful ways, none were more lasting than the loyalty of his love. No rolled newspaper, no

verbal abuse, not even the broom could deter him from greeting me warmly the next time we met. Even after I forsook him, he gave me a prodigal's welcome upon our next meeting. His indiscriminating show of affection mocks the reserve with which I imitate Silas Marner in doling out my love, lest some of it be ill-used or wasted.

Watching a stranger approach him with a tentative hand outstretched, ready to pull back at the slightest cause, and then to watch as he picked the pockets of their hearts, brings a smile to me as I remember such occasions. It was not his style to wait to see if they

were friendly. He assumed they were. And not surprisingly, they were. Golda Meir understood this when she observed, "I have always felt sorry for people afraid of feeling, of sentimentality, who are unable to weep with their whole heart. Because those who do not know how to weep do not know how to laugh either."

If Balaam could learn lessons from an obstinate ass, I am not too proud to accept the wisdom of a dog. Like his more orthodox counterpart in the Old Testament, out of his message issues both comfort and challenge. **MISSION**

BOOKS

By Bobbie Lee Holley

Towards the Mountain: An Autobiography of Love and Justice

By EDWARD G. HOLLEY

Alan Paton. *Towards the Mountain: An Autobiography*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980, 320pp., \$16.95.

For those of us who first met South African novelist, Alan Paton, through *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948), this first volume of his autobiography, *Towards the Mountain*, should have tremendous appeal. Even now, three decades after first reading *Cry, the Beloved Country*, I cannot re-read it without tears coming to my eyes. For it is one of those rare books written under the influence of a powerful emotion (p. 271) about themes of love and justice which lie at the heart of the Christian faith.

Readers of so-called Christian novels can only agree with Reinhold Niebuhr's comments when *Cry, the Beloved Country* first appeared:

The novels that aim at being Christian novels are pretty terrible, aren't they? Why do they so seldom succeed? I think, though, that Alan Paton in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, succeeds. The book has a genuine religious Christian content and has a nobly tragic element in it. It is about the only recent religious novel that succeeds.

Thirty-two years later Niebuhr's words are still true.

What experiences and persons influenced Alan Paton, this incredibly human, deeply committed, Christian author? His autobiography, *Towards the Mountain*, tells us with honesty and feeling. The title comes from Isaiah 11:9, the prophet's prediction

that a time will come when "they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain." Thus one understands from the first that Paton will view his life as a search for that holy mountain where men neither hurt nor destroy — a search that will consume him and will not end until life itself is ended.

In his last chapter Paton sums up what he believes are the subthemes of his life:

The birth and rise of Afrikaner nationalism is one of the most powerful subthemes of my life story. My childhood and boyhood in the city of Pietermaritzburg, an intense love of nature, the discovery of literature, the influence of Railton Dent, and the conscious adoption of service as the proper watchword for life, love and marriage and family life, the slow awakening to the real nature of South African society, and the opportunity granted to few of creating a new institution out of an old, all these have been subthemes of my life. (p. 307.)

On the way to this summary, Paton describes in great detail his secular and spiritual journeys toward the holy mountain. He raises fundamental questions: Why does one love a specific piece of land or country so much? What is the place of punishment in society? What did Jesus mean by that confusing scripture that one should love his enemies? How does one choose between the rigid fundamentalism of his parents and the more open and less exclusive service agencies like the Students' Christian Association

Edward G. Holley is Dean of the School of Library Science, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

and Toc H, Christian movements but not closed to non-Christians who could subscribe to their principles? What about divorce, marital fidelity, sex, etc.? What about racial justice and hatred and war? With these universal questions Paton has struggled intellectually and emotionally during most of his seventy-seven years. Happily for us, his contributions to the discussion of such difficult questions have had a profound effect far beyond his beloved South Africa where he has battled the forces of an increasingly authoritarian and repressive government.

Let this reviewer confess that, while he found Paton's discussions fascinating, he found the first few chapters rougher going than he had expected. Paton's writing generally has a lyrical quality and economy of words that I found lacking in this book. If the reader wants a briefer story of his life, interwoven with a moving tribute to his first wife, Dorrie, he should read *For You Departed* (1969). There one will find the story of his life and faith in fewer pages. But *Towards the Mountain* is longer, more intellectually questing, and less devotional. Thus if the reader of *Mission Journal* wants to address tough questions within the context of Paton's life, and in the process, re-examine his own struggles with these important questions, then *Towards the Mountain* becomes must reading.

Let me cite a few examples of principles with which readers of the *Journal* will find it easy to identify:

The Service Ideal

Unquestionably the ideal of service has been the most important principle in Alan Paton's life. He gives credit to his friendship with a fellow student, Railton Dent, at Natal University College, 1919-23, for this emphasis. He notes:

Dent was . . . a committed Christian. Committed Christians have faults just as commonly as other people, but . . . he taught me one thing, the theme of which will run right through this book . . . that life must be used in the service of a cause greater than oneself. This can be done by a Christian for two reasons: one is obedience to his Lord, the other is purely pragmatic, namely that one is going to miss the meaning of life if one doesn't. (p. 59.)

Two organizations played a major role in reinforcing Dent's teaching: Toc H, a Christian service organization established during World War I, and the Christian Students' Association.

In discussing Toc H, Paton says that its aim was to spread the gospel without preaching it. "The Toc H compass had four points, To Love Widely, To Build Bravely, To Think Fairly, To Witness Humbly" (p. 104). Incidentally, some American critics wholly misunderstand the nature of this organization, one calling it a kind of British Rotary or Kiwanis. Though the Toc H emphasis was service, at its base it was fundamentally a Christian organization.

In the Christian Students' Association at University College, Paton encountered the same lesser and greater moralities he knew so well from home: no smoking, drinking, dancing, gambling, etc. But the "greatest of the greater moralities was not chastity or purity, but it could well be called obedience. It was, if I may repeat, to have a purpose for one's life, and this purpose was the service of others" (p. 62).

Personal and Societal Responsibility

During his study to become a teacher, Alan Paton read the works of behavioral psychologist, J.B. Watson. This brought him face to face with the dilemma between determinism and free will. Though Paton had no strong view of free will as a dogma, he nonetheless came to the conclusion that neither determinism nor indeterminism were the whole story and thus opted for what he himself called "self determination" (pp. 75-76). Of his choice he later states that

a belief in responsibility is very like a belief in God; one

holds it because he chooses to hold it, it is in fact a *faith*, and is based on "evidence of things not seen." As I have written earlier, I hold myself responsible for my actions, even while I accept that I am not in full control of them. But I choose not to believe that I have *no* control over them. (p. 202.)

From this sense of personal responsibility also comes a sense of responsibility for the society in which one lives. Not that all was high and noble. In explaining his decision to become the Warden of Diepkloof Reformatory he exclaims, "What a mixture it was, ambition, vanity, and high purpose!" (p. 138.)

His sense of societal responsibility was considerably enhanced by his service on a commission appointed by the Bishop of Johannesburg to study what it meant to be the mind of Christ for South Africa. Paton calls his service on the commission "one of the seminal events of my life," for despite his years at Diepkloof Reformatory with 400-700 Black boys, he learned first hand the enormity of South Africa's racial problems. Some of the brightest minds wrestled with many questions during a two-year period, 1941-43, with each protagonist believing his view was the will of God and his opponent's will merely the will of the church. Paton raises the question, "How does one tell the difference between the man who is trying to obey God's will and the man who wants the church to do something that he wants to be done? . . . Today I trust only one kind of person who claims to be trying to do God's will, and that is the one who does it humbly" (p. 248). At a conference in England in 1946 Paton was to meet and hear Reinhold Niebuhr for the first time. Niebuhr was wrestling with the problem of moral man and immoral society. Though Paton thought him a brilliant speaker, what he remembered thirty years later was Niebuhr's comment that individual man could become a saint, but collective man was a tough proposition (p. 260).

(continued on back cover)

FORUM



Dear Forum:

Win Winship, in the April, 1981, issue of *Mission Journal* suggests that I have "fallen victim" to the practice of fitting the elderly into the procrustean bed of serenity, quoting Simone de Beauvoir as the authority. Our studies at Duke University, along with countless others throughout the country, have demonstrated time and again that aging does not lead to decreased life satisfaction, nor increased internal conflict. Unfortunately, the existential pessimism of de Beauvoir and others has pervaded our society with myths not based in reality, but in the despair of a few articulate but inaccurate elders.

Dan Blazer
Durham, North Carolina

Dear Forum:

The April issue was a fine job of "assessing our task." Now we need to look soberly at the nature of our challenge. As I see it, the challenge is to live the Christian life of "justice, mercy and faith" without necessarily relying on "forms and structures." The short-cut mentality which is satisfied with forms and structures will fail to identify demonic forces or "principalities," and recognition becomes doubly difficult when restorationism is a servant of the principalities.

John McCook
Oklahoma City, OK

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The Choice of a Christian Church

Paton was born into a deeply religious, Christadelphian family. The brothers and sisters in the Christadelphian group had an approach to religion which was simple in life, abstemious in habit, biblically based, premillennial, immersionist, and exclusivistic. Though Paton had respect for their views, he decided not to become a Christadelphian, much to his mother's disappointment. Why? Doctrines? Authoritarianism of his father? The attraction of the less exclusive SCA? Probably all three, he says, but his ecumenical spirit developed early. And there is no question of the SCA influence where membership made "differences between Anglicans and Methodists seem unimportant" (p. 74).

Though he subsequently worshipped with the Methodists during his teaching years in Ixopo, and even taught in their Sunday School, he eventually cast his lot with the Anglicans. For a while he was attracted to the Oxford Group, an austere, dedicated group of Christians who wanted to reconvert other Christians who had lapsed, or drifted, or become lazy (p. 119). They demanded absolute purity and honesty and pursued their aims with a zeal to "hunt and capture souls." The inexorability of their purpose and their relentlessness repelled him. "I had not yet learned . . . that the world cannot be made anew, that the battle between good and evil is perennial, that the purpose of a good life is not to win the battle, but to wage it unceasingly" (p. 122).

When his first child was born in 1930, Paton decided to join the Anglican Church. To his friend and prelate, Harry Skelton, he confessed that he had trouble with the 39 Articles and other church doctrines. Skelton assured him that if he could accept the Christian faith as expressed in the Apostle's Creed and try to keep God's will and commandments, he would be halfway there. But why Anglicanism? For two reasons: his attraction to its emphasis upon "affirmation of the good rather than its condemnation of the bad, and its aversion to emotionalism" (emphasis added) and because he did not want his children to grow up in a divided home (p. 125). It is clear that the stories from the Bible during his growing up years and the magnificent phrases of the *Book of Common Prayer* from his life-long participation in Anglican worship services have had a decided influence on his writing as well as on his Christian faith.

The Christian and War

Paton states that his pacifist streak developed early (p. 32), was reinforced by his work with T.O.C.H. groups whose purpose was to reconcile past enemies, and by his observation of the tremendous divisiveness caused by the Beer and subsequent wars on the people of South Africa. Yet Paton is honest enough not to dodge the question of the "necessary" or "just" war. There is a paradox to pacifism which he admits. How can one, for example, sit quietly by while a maniac like Hitler tries to stamp out the ideals to which Christians are committed?

During World War II his ideals and the realities of war came into conflict and he even tried to enlist because he thought the defeat of Hitler was essential for civilization. The trauma caused by such decisions is certainly obvious. Yet Paton's descriptions of the difficulties faced by the conscientious Christian in facing such decisions merits reading by all honest persons (pp. 228-32). For though Paton came to the conclusion that war sometimes has to be waged, he also believes that war and participation in war are totally irreconcilable with Christianity and morality. When I read these pages I was reminded of the recent PBS television series based on Vera Brittain's strongly pacifist *Testament of Youth* (based on her World War I experiences) and the pope's encyclical, "The Horror Called War," in Walter Murphy's intriguing novel, *The Vicar of Christ*.

Conclusion

Perhaps these four examples give the reader a good indication of why I think Paton's autobiography, despite its prosaic beginning chapters, is very much worth reading. Alan Paton is a sensitive soul, whose Christian principles have brought him both successes and failures; but his candor in recording his struggles with major questions confronting the human race can reassure us that we are not alone.

Let me add one more comment before I close. Whatever failings this book has in living up to his previous literary standards, Alan Paton is superb in his descriptions of people. I cite two examples:

Tom Savage, Bishop of Zululand, whom he uses as an example of the work of the Holy Spirit: "I am tempted to say that he was the holiest man I ever knew but the description doesn't quite fit, because of the earthiness and saltiness of his humour. . . . He had innocent blue eyes and an irresistible smile, and he had the extraordinary gift of making men feel repentant without accusing them" (p. 226).

Geoffrey Clayton, Bishop of Johannesburg, on whose commission he sat: "When Clayton, with that great bald head that housed those subtle mechanisms of genius that enabled him to speak words of such wisdom with simplicity, read the words of the great prophets, he did so with a kind of controlled passion that could be electrifying, and in so doing bound many of his priests to him with bonds that would never be broken, so that they would forgive him his tantrums and his petulance" (p. 242).

A man who can write like that is well worth reading.

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